

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM

RELEASE IN FULL

2003

19 August 1954

filecopy

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. Frank H. Oram
Deputy Assistant Director for American Republics, USIA

SUBJECT : Activities of the Social Research Group in Guatemala
4 - 9 August

1. The Chairman of the Group arrived in Guatemala on 4 August, and went immediately to the United States Ambassador to explain the purpose and plans of the Social Research Group. He was well received and the Ambassador was sympathetic with the plans of the Group. On 6 August the Chairman contacted Guatemalan leaders of the Comite' Nacional de Defensa Contra el Comunismo. The latter named 25 Guatemalans to aid in the research effort of the Group and facilitated access to documents collected from the various Communist organizations which had existed in Guatemala before the coup, from the personal effects of ex-President Arbenz and other officials of the Arbenz regime, and from government files. In addition, the Comite' aided in the acquisition of working accommodations for the Social Research Group.

2. On August 7 Juan Mirem, Chief of the Comite', and the Chairman of the Group discussed plans in detail. It was decided that, in addition to the study of the Communist documents, a close relationship should be established with the Propaganda Ministry so that the Comite' could release publicity concerning any of the Group's findings which are deemed valuable in the fight against Communism. It was emphasized that the Group's purpose was only to assist the Comite' in exploiting the documents.

3. On the afternoon of 8 August the second phase of the document exploitation plan went into effect, with the U.S. and Guatemalan forces both commencing full scale sorting of valuable and worthless materials. No content selection was attempted and considerable elimination of worthless material was accomplished. In this preliminary sorting, there was only a small effort to eliminate duplication of documents, and a liberal interpretation was given to the possible value of documents. Nevertheless, within a short time large piles of worthless paper were on the way to the incinerator, and huge heaps of papers of possible value were being placed in boxes to await a second and more selective sorting.

4. On 9 August the secondary selection work began on the materials already passed through the preliminary sorting routine, and the latter activity continued. The more experienced sorters and analysts were assigned to the secondary sorting.

5. At a meeting of the Chairman of the Social Research Group, Guatemalan leaders of the Comite' Nacional de Defensa Contra el Comunismo,

and the Guatemalan

and the Guatemalan Minister of Propaganda, the following propaganda plan was decided upon for exploitation of materials developed by the Social Research Group:

a. Local

1. Publications of photographs taken by the Group within the country of the massive stacks of documents, some with corner insets of Russian works, in Spanish, with Moscow postmarks on packaging, and others with huge photographs, paintings and posters of Stalin, Mac, Lenin, Malenkov and Arbenz among the confusion of documents.
2. As important documents come to light, revealing Communist activities in Guatemala which can be exploited for propaganda purposes, summaries of them will be delivered to the Minister of Propaganda. His reportorial staff will write articles, slanted for certain newspapers and sections, from these summaries. Photographs of documents responsible for the arrest of Communists will be printed with the articles describing their apprehension, etc.
3. Preparation of a short newsreal sequence of the documents to be placed in all Guatemalan theaters.
4. Preparation of radio material. A meeting has been held with the Director of TGN who has promised full cooperation.

b. International

1. Release of important photographs direct from the Ministry of Propaganda, to international photo and news agencies, newspapers and diplomatic missions. This will be aided by USIA. Arrangement is being made through USIA, for instance, for the fabrication of plastic mats in Mexico, to be released from Guatemala.
2. Articles slanted for specific newspapers will be released by the Minister of Propaganda, and alternatively by USIA and/or Embassy channels. For example, if the Group uncovers a document linking the Communist Parties of Guatemala and Chile, appropriate newspaper releases will be sent by the Guatemalan Minister of propaganda to a Chilean newspaper. The United States Embassy will be informed, and USIA will be informed for their possible use or transmittal to countries outside of Guatemala.

3. Insertion of

3. Insertion of newscast sequence in some international service will be attempted.

4. Radio materials developed from documents uncovered by the Group will be used on TGU short wave, reaching Mexico and neighboring Central American Republics.

5. A team, consisting of a military officer and a civilian, will be appointed by the Guatemalan Government to make a rapid tour of all Latin American capitals. In each Latin capital they will hold an intimate cocktail party for the military corps and attaches, giving away kits of the atrocity pictures that are too rough for normal publication, photostatic documents, etc. They will explain to "brother officers" the danger, for them, of infiltrating Communism.

6. Eventual publication of a booklet with photographs and detailed translations of the documents uncovered will be undertaken. A note in the book will say that the documents are on display in such and such a place, and that all diplomatic representatives are invited to inspect them at any time.